



Christmas Eve or Day:

Light all four candles plus the Christ candle which represents the presence of Christ in our lives and in the world.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

Reflection: Why do you think the wise men left everything to follow a star? What “star” are you following right now? Where is it taking you? What have you offered to Jesus?

Prayer: Acknowledge that God is with you right now. Thank God for His gift to you. Make a commitment to follow God this year. Make other commitments to grow spiritually, such as Scripture memory, Bible reading, prayer, spending time with other Christians, and sharing your faith with family, friends and coworkers.

Activity: Talk about how you will follow Jesus this year. Write your commitments down and then post them somewhere in your home where you will see them every day. The refrigerator or bathroom mirror are good places. Ask your family to hold you accountable to your commitments. Sing Christmas carols together or go caroling.



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The Advent Season:

During the Advent/Christmas season, we have a wonderful opportunity to draw closer together to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Ironically, this is also the time of year when we find ourselves being pulled apart, as schedules become crowded with what we believe to be necessities. This year, let us commit ourselves anew as a church and as families to take the time out each week and focus on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What Advent Means:

Advent is a Latin word meaning “to come.” As Christians, we remember the coming of God as a child, the coming of Christ into our lives, and the promise that Christ will come again. We celebrate the birth of Christ on Christmas Day, but our preparation starts with Advent. Advent is the first season of the Christian year. It begins four Sundays before Christmas day. It is a time of honoring God through prayer, reflecting on our relationship with Christ, and the manner in which we live our lives as Christ's disciples.

How to Celebrate Advent:

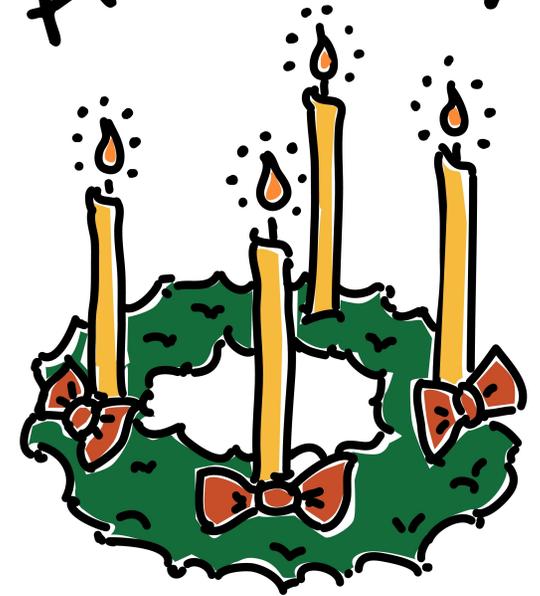
There are many ways to remember that Advent is not simply a way to celebrate Christmas earlier. Besides setting aside special times of prayer and reflection you might consider making an advent wreath. The wreath's round shape symbolizes God's never-ending love. The evergreens represent everlasting life. The candles can be any color, but purple represents royalty and is the traditional color for the advent season. The larger white candle is called the Christ candle, and it represents the purity of Jesus.

Additional resources and this pamphlet are available at:

www.rcovenant.org/advent-resources

Family Devotions for

ADVENT



A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the
LORD -

and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

Isaiah 11:1-3 (NIV)



Week 1:

Light one candle, which represents Christ as the Light of the World.

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:1-5, 26-33; Psalm 25:1-5

Reflection: Why was Mary scared? What have you been scared of? Why? Sometimes when we are scared we run and hide, but what did Mary do? What do these passages say about God? How does knowing these things about God make you feel?

Prayer: Tell God how awesome He is. Rejoice that “nothing is impossible” with Him. Pray that God will help you to focus on the reason for the Christmas season amidst the busyness of family, shopping, and events. Ask God to fill you with His Light and Joy.

Activity: Work together to assemble an advent wreath. Ideas can be found at www.rcovenant.org/advent-resources. Discuss what Christmas means to you, then write a Christmas or Advent song or poem together. You can also draw or paint a Christmas or Advent piece of art to display in your home.



Week 2:

Light two candles. The second candle represents the Hope we have in Christ.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 1:18-25; John 10:1-10

Reflection: During the Christmas season, we often think more about what we want than what God has already given us. What kind of man was Joseph? What reason do we have for hope

according to Matthew 1:21? How is God “with us” today? When or where do you notice God? How does God give us hope?

Prayer: Confess to God the various things in your life that distract you from Him. Name some of those distractions. Ask God to protect you from wanting what other people have or what you have seen in advertisements this Christmas season. Ask God to help you discern between wants and needs. Thank God for all the blessings that He has already given you.

Activity: As a family, decorate the cover of a notebook, journal, or scrapbook. You can paste a family picture on the cover. Discuss some positive memories family members have so far, and record them in the pages of your notebook with dates, if you remember them. The memories can include: something one family member said or did to make another laugh or smile, something positive that happened to the family, something the family did together, etc.



Week 3:

Light three candles. The third candle represents our Joy at the coming of Christ.

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-7; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

Reflection: God did not give us stuff, but gave us Himself. Where were you born? How do you think Mary and Joseph felt about their long journey? What did Mary and Joseph have to rejoice about? How can you give yourself to other people by serving them?

Prayer: Tell God how grateful you are to be in a relationship with Him. Express your desire to know God more deeply and to share yourself with God and others more fully. Ask for the strength to apologize to people you have hurt and to forgive

those that have hurt you. Thank God for your friends and family. Pray for those that do not yet know Jesus, and ask God to guide you in connecting them with Him.

Activity: Take time this week to be Christ's Joy to others. For example: visit a nursing home, take food to a food bank, bring a treat to a neighbor, call and talk to someone that lives far away, etc. God desires for you not to just give more presents, but more presence. Use the Christmas season as an opportunity to forgive those that have treated you poorly, to heal broken relationships, to celebrate great friendships, and to spend time with new people.



Week 4:

Light four candles. The fourth candle represents Christ as the Prince of Peace.

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 5:1-12

Reflection: Jesus' birth changed the world. God gave us Jesus to save us from death. God still wants to change the world through you. How does everyone in Luke 2 react to Jesus' birth? Where can you grow in your faith? Who can you help grow in their faith? How can you show to others the love that God has shown you?

Prayer: Rejoice that God has given you His Son to save you and show you how to live. Confess that you do not always “love your neighbor as yourself.” Ask God to fill you up with love and to give you His heart to share love with everyone.

Activity: Have everyone in your family tell each other why they love them. Smile at a stranger. Write a note of encouragement to a friend. Give someone a hug. Leave a gift for your mailman. Be nice to a telemarketer. Clean someone's house for them. Think of a way to show love to someone.